

1165  
S

# National . . . . Religion.

An Address to the  
LIVERPOOL CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR UNION,

With an Excursus  
ON THE  
"Higher Criticism."

By SAMUEL SMITH,  
Esq., M.P.



SECOND EDITION.  
Completing 100 Thousand.

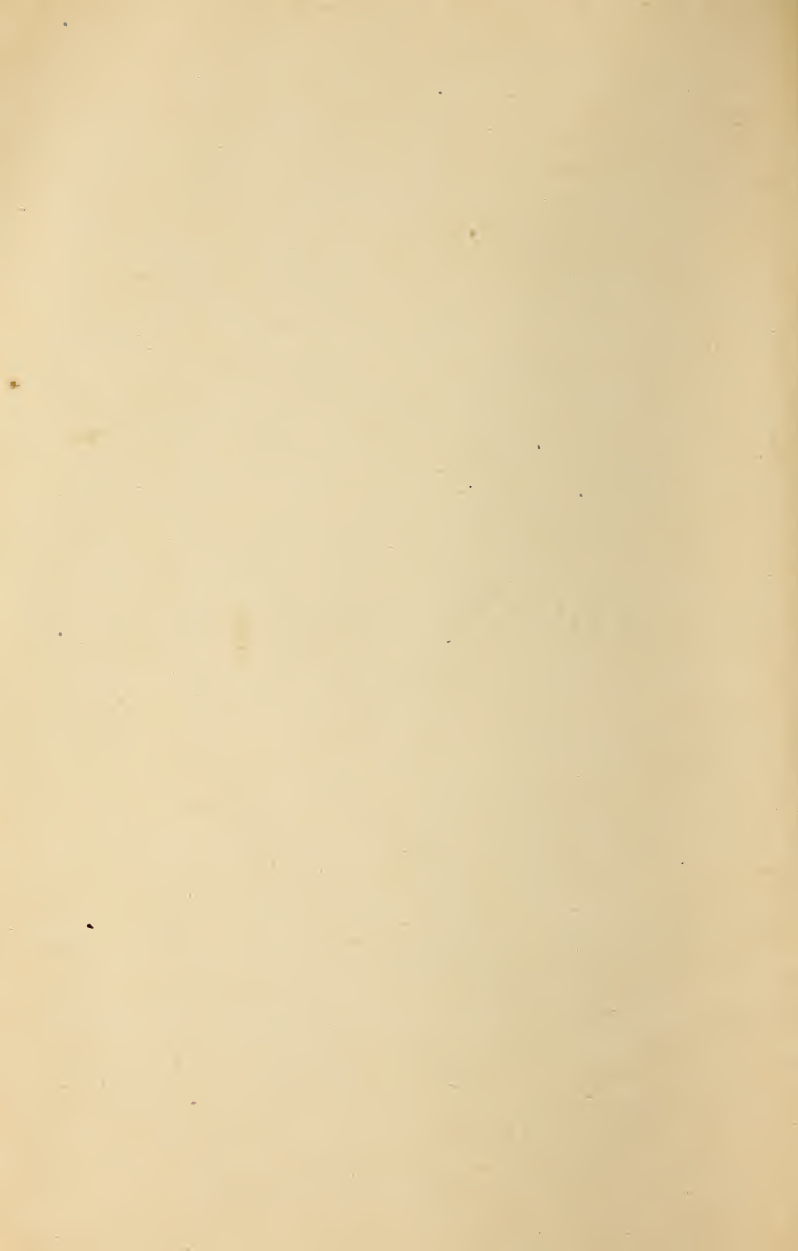
London: CHAS. J. THYNNE,  
Wycliffe House, 6 Great Queen  
Street, Lincoln's Inn, W.C. +

Price ONE PENNY.





NATIONAL RELIGION.



# National . . . . Religion.

An Address to the  
LIVERPOOL CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOUR UNION.

With an Excursus  
ON THE  
"Higher Criticism."

By SAMUEL SMITH,  
Esq., M.P.



THIRD EDITION.  
Completing One Hundred and  
Thirty-five Thousand.

London: CHAS. J. THYNNE,  
Wycliffe House, 6, Great Queen  
Street, Lincoln's Inn, W.C. †



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2014

## PREFACE.

---

THE following pamphlet contains an address to the Christian Endeavour Societies of Liverpool by their President, Samuel Smith, M.P., on the subject of "National Religion." It is followed by an Excursus on the subject of Biblical Criticism, suggested by the recent publication of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, and other rationalistic books which treat with scant respect the authority of Holy Scripture, and even the sacred verities of the Christian religion. A determined effort is made in the name of scholarship to familiarise the British public with the most destructive German criticism, which has detached the mass of the male population, at least in North Germany, from all regard for Christian worship. The same widespread agnosticism is developing in our own country from similar causes. The higher critics are in some cases themselves believing men, but they do not realize how inevitably the lay mind presses to its logical conclusions the inferences they draw as to the fallibility of Scripture. They fail to see how the authority of Christ is compromised by a criticism which dissolves into myths what He believed and taught as the Word of God.

The writer has sought to throw into a kind of parable or parody what the ultimate effect of such teaching must be.

He knows of course that there is a moderate and reasonable criticism which has done more good than harm. He is concerned chiefly with the destructive theories which are increasingly borrowed from Holland and Germany and are taught increasingly in our schools of theology. He knows that men like Dr. George Adam Smith would repudiate the fatal conclusions of the most advanced critics, but even that able and believing writer appears to him to accept premises which will ultimately carry his readers to conclusions which he would deplore.

May God in His mercy arrest this insidious attack on the Christian faith, and preserve in our pulpits and theological colleges a deep reverence for the Word of God!



Liverpool Christian Endeavour Union  
Presidential Address—Good Friday, 1901,—  
on National Religion.

---



THINK it may interest this Convention of Christian Endeavour Societies if I take as the subject of my Presidential Address "National Religion." A somewhat long public life has familiarised me with the ebbs and flows of public feeling on moral and religious questions. I have felt of late years that it is possible to teach Christianity too exclusively on an individual basis and that we hardly recognise how much the nation is a living organism, liable to periods of spiritual growth and decline. Certainly the greater part of the Old Testament is occupied with God's dealings with nations. The prophets are charged with powerful denunciations of evil, and calls to national repentance, and Israel was finally cast off because of disobedience. The New Testament deals more directly

with the individual soul : " Each one of us must give account of himself to God " : " What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? " Yet the social environment is not neglected : the final aim of Christ's work is a Kingdom of Righteousness. " And there were great voices in heaven saying, The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. "

The closing picture we have of God's Kingdom in the book of Revelation is the Holy City, New Jerusalem, " The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it . . . . and there shall not enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination nor maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. "

This being so, it may be not unprofitable to take a glance at our own nation, and ask whither we are tending.

Nothing is more difficult than to measure national progress. The great complexity of modern life, its endless currents and counter-currents, its advancement in one direction, and retrogression in another ; all tend to bewilder and confuse the observer. But there stand out certain broad features which he who runneth may read. I have felt since I entered Parliament that there has been a marked decline in what I may call the enthusiasm for national righteousness. In the earlier days of the Victorian epoch we had trumpet tongues that proclaimed the highest standards of duty ; Gladstone and Bright never ceased to hold up ideals of national life formed and modelled on the

teaching of our Saviour. They had the ear of the nation, indeed I might say the ear of Christendom. All great moral evils both at home and abroad were unsparingly denounced. An incessant agitation went on for the abolition of all forms of slavery, of injurious and immoral trades like that of opium, and of all laws that favoured vicious indulgence: for the emancipation of oppressed races and nationalities: and for international peace and arbitration. Men like Garibaldi and Kossuth were our national heroes. England was looked to as the home of freedom by all oppressed races. Parliament was largely occupied with schemes of social reform, and it accurately reflected the earnest tone of the community.

A great change for the worse has in my judgment taken place during the last twenty years. The moral sense of the nation has been weakened; wealth and luxury have immensely increased, and with them have come in lower standards of life and duty. Imperialism has taken the place of Responsibility. The prophets who struck the keynote of righteousness have passed away. They have left no successors, at least none of commanding genius, to rouse the nation. They have been succeeded by mere politicians and opportunists. An air of cynicism has replaced the earlier enthusiasm, and the tone of fashionable society is, above all things, "not too much zeal." Exactly the same feature has characterised the literature of the day. The lofty strains of Wordsworth and Tennyson have not found successors in England, nor those of Longfellow or Whittier in America, for exactly the same process has been going on in the other Anglo-Saxon

nation. Materialism has been the dominant note, idealism has been scouted, and under the name of realism a class of books have come into existence which are little better than garbage, and which were scarcely known in England in the early Victorian period. The Drama has felt the change in its most deadly form, and the public tolerates, and even applauds, debasing pictures of life. As Clement Scott says :—

“ Our dramatists of the first class have one after the other broken away from the beautiful, the helpful, and the ideal, and coquetted with the distorted, the tainted and the poisonous in life. Any appeal to them in the name of art is vain. According to their utilitarian creed all must be good that pays, and so for the moment our theatres are crowded to excess to see ‘ snap-shot society dramas,’ with their pronounced vulgarity, their hideous presentments of men and women, and their cheap satire.”

This was the state of affairs in England when we drifted into the South African War. The nation was surfeited by prosperity, and blinded to the real facts of the situation, and the disasters and heavy losses that followed came like lightning from a blue sky. I saw much the same condition of things when I visited the United States in 1860. I found excessive pride in material success, intense self-confidence and contempt for sober counsels. The thunder-clouds were heavily charged, and the tempest broke next year ; and for four weary years the great Republic was deluged with blood and almost rent in pieces. I again visited it after the war was over, and found a wonderful change in the public mind. A chastened feeling had replaced the boastful tone. The best men had come to the

front. A deep religious movement had passed over the land, and one felt that these words had a national as well as an individual application: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

Before asking whether we may expect similar fruits from our national troubles, I wish to turn for a moment to the religious state of our country during the last two or three decades. After all, the roots of a nation's well-being lie deep in private and personal religion. The outward exhibition of righteousness can only be based on a foundation of pious God-fearing lives, and when that disappears or is fatally impaired, the outer fabric topples down.

I note two great changes that have passed over the religious world of England in the second half of the 19th century: the first a constructive movement, the second a destructive. The constructive movement was the great High Church revival. In its essence it was originally a movement for a deeper and more spiritual life. No one can doubt that its originators, Newman, Pusey and Keble, thought that by raising the idea of the Church and the sacraments they were deepening religious life and reverting to primitive Christianity. The final consequences were not then foreseen, nor indeed for many years after. The earlier teachers of high sacerdotal doctrine were godly men practising much self-denial, and introducing among the easy-going Anglican clergy a type of religion modelled on the best ages of monastic life. Even we who are strong Protestants will gladly allow that the aims of that party were pure in their inception. Their mistake was that they exalted the teaching of "the Fathers"



above that of the Scriptures. They made the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries their model, not the Church of the New Testament; and as the movement went on it steadily tended towards the Roman type, and practically became a religion of priests and sacraments, rather than one of faith in and obedience to Christ. Looking back upon it now after two generations have passed, we see that it produces the same kind of fruit as it did before the Reformation in all Roman Catholic countries. A priestly caste usurps the prerogatives of the King and Head of the Church. The responsibility of the individual believer is handed to "a priest," and enfeeblement of the mind and conscience is the inevitable result. The ultimate outcome in all countries that adopt sacerdotalism is the decay of individual responsibility to God, and widespread infidelity among the nation's manhood. Men will not believe that their eternal destiny depends upon absolution by "a priest" who may be, and often is, a poor weak and erring mortal; and sooner or later a fierce revolt ensues. I fear that already widespread agnosticism has followed from the Sacerdotal movement in England.

Unhappily, another cause has widely sapped belief in the Free and Evangelical Churches: I allude to Biblical criticism. This has been carried to such lengths that many have concluded there is no certitude in the Christian religion. Not only is the Old Testament pulverised by destructive criticism, but the plainest statements of the Four Evangelists are questioned, and multitudes of untrained minds imagine that books like *Robert Elsmere* dispose of all miracle,

and especially of the chief miracle of all—the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord. There was a time (happily now passing) when unbelief ruled the scientific world. Huxley, Tyndall, and Darwin were supposed to have demolished supernatural religion. This phase has passed away, and the greatest scientists like Lord Kelvin, Sir George Stokes, Prof. Adams, and others are evangelical believers ; but the destructive effects of evolution theories have sunk into the masses and the constructive side of modern science has not yet been popularised.

These are but hasty generalisations. One can only glance in a short address like this at the intellectual movements of the age, but I feel that some reference is due to the lamentable decline in attendance at public worship which all deplore. I cannot give statistics ; but it is beyond doubt that the majority of our male population can no longer be classed as worshippers at any shrine. The Sunday has ceased with most to be a holy day ; it is a day of amusement to the masses, at all events in the Metropolis and the chief provincial towns. Three institutions which used to be sheet-anchors of the Christian faith : “ God’s house,” “ God’s Day,” and “ God’s Word,” are all neglected by the bulk of our town population, and by many of the rural population as well. And now I ask myself : have we any hope to hold out of permanent improvement ? Or is the nation going the way of the great empires of antiquity, which all perished of internal decay ?

Before answering this question I would interpolate the remark that one side of the national life has not

deteriorated, that of practical benevolence, as shown in the care of the weak and suffering. There has been a great increase of charity in recent years. Hospitals and institutions of all kinds for the helpless and destitute have immensely increased, and large numbers of people freely give of their means and labour to this form of philanthropy. The administration of the Poor law has been greatly humanised, and so far as the State is concerned, its action is far more humane than it used to be. Immense benefits have come from the great extension of Local Government. Sanitation is far better, the conditions of life are much easier for the labouring classes, and gross abuses of all kinds are checked by law. If man is simply contemplated as a citizen of this world his lot has greatly improved: it is on the spiritual side that we find retrogression. These two movements have been going on side by side for many years. The earthly environment has been improved, while the spiritual and heavenly has declined. I do not underrate public duty in regard to secular things. Man has his material side, and it is just and right that it claim its due share; but our Blessed Lord says: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The mistake is in thinking that the mere outer environment is everything, and that the inner life of the soul is but a dream. Unfortunately this is the current philosophy of multitudes now-a-days, and the question is, do we possess recuperative power to regain the higher life on a large and national scale?

No one can pretend to certitude on such a question. But I am not despondent. I think I see signs that



portend what we may call a national revival of religion. The trials which the nation has passed through have sobered it. There is much less of the spirit of boastfulness, and there is a great increase of the spirit of patriotic self-sacrifice. Multitudes have freely offered themselves for the service of their country; and all that involves self-sacrifice elevates a man. Furthermore the death of our noble Queen has deeply impressed the nation with the power of Christian character. It is obvious and allowed by all, that the splendid devotion to duty which distinguished Queen Victoria drew its inspiration from the deep roots of personal religion. The merely material view of life has been rebuked by the spectacle of the best of all our Sovereigns drawing her strength from the verities of the Christian Faith. The two greatest lives of last century—greatest in their widespread influence, in their long duration, in their deep inmost loyalty to Christ, were Queen Victoria and William Ewart Gladstone. Widely differing in many things and representing two opposite and almost contrasted types of religion, yet both bowed the knee to the same Heavenly Master. To each of them “the things seen were but temporal, the things unseen were eternal.” I feel sure that the influence of these lives has not died. It lives, and will bless this coming century.

I think I see a decided ebb in the tide of unbelief and a greater openness to admit the claims of Christ. What may be called blatant atheism has quite gone down. The evil now is not so much reasoned infidelity as indifferentism. The common people acknowledge a good life when they see it; and whether it is Bishop

Ingram in the East End of London or Hugh Price Hughes in the West End, they readily perceive and admire true consecration of life.

I think I note also a marked return to what I may call rational orthodoxy among the Free Churches. A generation ago the tendency was the other way. It looked as if large sections of the Christian world were losing their hold of the supernatural side of religion, and substituting mere humanitarianism for the faith of Christ. This movement is arrested, and the action of the Free Church Council is all for evangelical belief. But certain new elements are finding a place in the conception of the Christian faith which the harder doctrinal systems of earlier ages almost shut out. It is now perceived by many that the Sermon on the Mount is an integral part of the Christian faith as well as the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Romans. The words "Believe in Christ" are not dissociated from the words "Follow Christ," as they have too often been. "Christ for us" is rightly conjoined with "Christ in us." These sharp doctrinal definitions which shut out large sections of Christ's practical teaching because they did not logically harmonise with their theological formulas are being modified or abandoned. It is seen that Christianity is a life as much as a creed, and that a creed is worthless without a life, just as life needs the support of a living faith. "What God has joined together let not man put asunder." We are seeing that religion is many-sided, and that great varieties in its manifestation are part of God's design, that He never meant it to be a tame repetition of certain shibboleths, but an ever-living

spring of life and love. The writings of the American author Charles M. Sheldon supply a much needed corrective to the Westminster Confession and the XXXIX. Articles. They show the utter hollowness of nominal Christianity, *i.e.*, of faith without works. There was need for this. Even the best things get corrupted in time, and Evangelical Christianity, which is true and scriptural, tends to become a form of sound words rather than a holy, self-denying life. No form of genuine and vital religion can afford to do without cross-bearing. Christ's words are everlastingly true: "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." If I had to choose between the pious monks of the Middle Ages and a dead Protestantism I would much prefer the former. But we are not called to either alternative:

The trivial round, the common task  
Will furnish all we ought to ask:  
Room to deny ourselves, a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.

The common life of man, the sweet family ties, the loving service of our brethren, afford all the help needed to climb to heaven. Our Lord has consecrated common life by living it Himself, and we can best honour Him by following His example.

I look with great satisfaction on the wonderful growth of the Christian Endeavour movement. It takes hold of the young at the impressionable time of life. It supplies wholesome companionship when the character is plastic and easily moulded for good and

evil. It keeps up the study of Holy Scripture, and encourages the young to make a confession of faith and discipleship. The three millions of members already enrolled are a mighty army for good. They mean Christian citizenship and national righteousness wherever their influence goes. The United States is the home of this movement: over two millions of members are found there. It suits the active practical character of our American cousins, but it is spreading here also, with excellent results. I grieve that it is so much confined to the Free Churches: why should it not spread equally in the National Church? I fear the reason is the growth of priestly doctrine and the discouragement of religious work by laymen which always follows sacerdotal teaching. The Christian Endeavour movement is a preservative against priestcraft. It emphasizes the Lord's words: "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them;" also these other words, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

To be a Christian is not only to believe in Christ, but to work for the incoming of Christ's Kingdom. "*Laborare est orare.*" "He prayeth best who loveth best, all things both great and small." "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The Christian life has two sides, the contemplative and the active. We must have both if we are to be perfect. We must have something of Thomas á Kempis and something of Shaftesbury and Wilberforce. The good feature of the present age is its widespread benevolence: the

bad side its secularity. Let the Christian Endeavour shoot the golden thread of Christ's love across the earthly pattern of human kindness; let it unite the things of time to the things of eternity, the knowledge that comes of man to the faith that comes of God; and so realise the words of our great poet:

We have but faith : we cannot know ;  
 For knowledge is of things we see ;  
 And yet we trust it comes from Thee,  
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
 But more of reverence in us dwell,  
 That mind and soul, according well,  
 May make one music as before.

## The New School of Biblical Criticism:

### A PARABLE AND FORECAST.

---

“ABOUT a thousand years after this, a great school of philosophical historians arose in Europe. By that time the British Empire had passed away, and the causes of its “decline and fall” were expounded by future Gibbons. Among the causes of its decline a chief place was given to a war in South Africa, which was assigned to the years 1900 and 1901 A.D. But this historical school, profiting by the discoveries in Old Testament criticism, applied these methods of research to the ancient histories of England. They examined with microscopic care the various discrepancies in the accounts of the Boer War, the linguistic terms used by the annalists of the day, above all the evidence of later authorship and patriotic frauds, and were rewarded with astonishing discoveries which enabled them to recast the legendary history of those early times.

They discovered such astounding contradictions in the contemporary narratives as pointed clearly to a composite work drawn from several sources, and edited at a late date by a redactor who represented the dominant race. Upon unearthing some faded copies of a newspaper called the *London Times*, which were found enclosed in a cavity of the monument to a certain Queen Victoria, thought by some



to be identical with Boadicea, it was found that two entirely opposite views of the war were held in the ancient British senate. It was discovered that the speeches of men of Celtic names were for the most part full of praise of the Boers, while those of Anglo-Saxon names were filled with invectives against them. The names of Dillon, of Lloyd George, and Bryn Roberts—all Celts by origin—stood out as champions of the Boers, whereas the names of Chamberlain, Milner, and Rhodes, all Anglo-Saxon, were identified with strong attacks on the Dutch population of the Boer States. From this it was surmised that reminiscences of the Celtic resistance to Julius Cæsar had mingled with much later events.

Pursuing this golden thread further, the future Gibbons of the year 2900 disentangled the skein of errors into which traditional theories of ancient history had led us. It was clearly proved by subjective analysis that long periods of time and many wars were erroneously assigned to the years 1900 and 1901.

Some of the grounds for this conclusion may be indicated briefly. The despatches of the British Commander-in-Chief claimed a surprising series of victories, and extolled to the skies the valour and constancy of the British Army, especially as shown in the brilliant defence of Ladysmith and Mafeking. But the speeches of John Dillon and others poured contempt on these statements, accused the British Commanders of cruelty and inefficiency, and extolled to the skies the courage and patriotism of the Boers. Further exploration brought to light the opinion of contemporary nations such as the French and Germans, and it was found that the literature of

these countries was filled with abuse of Great Britain, accusing her of bringing on the war for the lust of gold, and of conducting it with great cruelty.

It became at last perfectly clear that the records of several wars had become fused into one. The prodigies of valour reported by the British Commander clearly belonged to the period of Cressy and Agincourt, when by all accounts the valour of the English nation was at the highest, and the disparaging contrast with the Boers evidently belonged to a much later period, say about 2400 A.D., when the British Empire was in a state of decay. This is all the more clear when you reflect that some 200,000 troops were unable to capture a Boer chief called De Wet, who had not more than 2,000 men under his command.

It is also proved more plainly by the strangely contradictory accounts given of De Wet. By the Celtic orators and by the French and German historians that have survived, he is represented as the William Tell or the William Wallace of South Africa, and his little band of heroes is likened to the Spartans at Thermopylæ; whereas the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers describe him as a kind of guerilla chief or brigand, whose principal occupation was wrecking trains and robbing their contents.

It is quite clear that the legendary hero was largely a creation of fancy. He resembled the Joshua of the Old Testament, who by Israelite tradition was supposed to have conquered Canaan, whereas it is now well known by scholars who have examined the tablets of Chaldea and Assyria that his exploits were largely mythical. Indeed, there is a startling analogy



between the composition of the Pentateuch, or, as it is now called, the Hexateuch, and the extant histories of the South African war. In the former case scholars have long ago discovered the composite materials that go to form the books ascribed to Moses and Joshua. They have detected Elohist and Jahwist elements which are combined in Genesis, and "the priestly code" in Leviticus and Deuteronomy which is at least 1000 years later than the primitive Ten Commandments, which perhaps was the sole work of Moses which has survived. Indeed, they have discovered several independent layers of history and legend that overlap one another in the early part of the Old Testament, and which they designate by various titles and even by coloured paragraphs, so that the common people can now easily see for themselves what is true and what is fabulous, and we are now in the year 2900 A.D. applying this marvellous touchstone to the mixture of truth and fable which go to form the ancient history of the South African war. Indeed, some of our most competent critics have gone even further. Gifted with rare insight, they have discovered that individual names do not represent persons at all, but tribes; and just as it is well known that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are but tribal names representing tribal religions, so it is held that such names as Chamberlain, Kruger, etc., do not represent individuals, but races of mankind. This becomes highly probable when you analyse the speeches attributed to these personages. Kruger is represented as a strange compound of greed, cunning, and religion. He is constantly appealing to the aid of his tribal deity, Jehovah, just as the Homeric heroes

appeal to Jupiter or Mars; whereas Chamberlain, Milner, and Rhodes preserve absolute silence on supernatural interposition. They evidently belong to a much later period, which we may designate the age of reason; Kruger belongs to the primitive age of superstition when men believed that celestial beings took an interest in human affairs. In fact, Kruger, in the opinion of some first-class German scholars, must have lived near the Homeric times, or at least in the early days of Christianity, while those other personages belong to an age when primitive religions had died out. Indeed, some of our acutest critics have discovered under different names an identity of character between a mythical hero called Oliver Cromwell and Paul Kruger. Both are represented as constantly appealing to the Almighty, and yet both are described as arrogant and ambitious and greedy of supreme power. It is coming to be suspected by our ablest scholars that these two personalities are but one; the Anglo-Saxon name Cromwell being the equivalent of the Low Dutch Kruger, just as the Greek Zeus is the equivalent of the Latin Jupiter. There are some slight difficulties connected with the different legends which have grown up around them, but these are not greater than have been successfully surmounted in the legends of Moses and Joshua. Who can believe for a moment that the story of the Exodus is true history or that the wilderness journey, or the apparition on Mount Sinai of the Most High, are anything but myths and allegories? So in like manner the incredible story of Cromwell and his Ironsides, and the execution of his King are obviously inventions of a later age, just as are the exploits of Kruger, who is

represented as a kind of blend between Hercules and Gideon !

The great principle which underlies our higher criticism is that ancient history is poetry rather than prose. It is the outcome of folk-lore and superstition ; and though it has a kernel of truth, it is in the main the product of a later period when the historic imagination was applied to primitive legends. In this way the siege of Troy, the taking of Jericho, the siege of Londonderry and that of Ladysmith are literary creations of a later date, Achilles and Hector typifying the conflict of Greek and Asiatic ideas ; Joshua and the king of Jericho represent the monotheistic and polytheistic types of Semitism, while Londonderry and Ladysmith of a later time represent, the one an age-long contest between traditional religion and liberty of thought, and the other, the struggle between progress and inertia. No trace has been found of a material siege of Ladysmith, no remains of ramparts or bastions, and our scholars have proved to demonstration that it ranks with such epics as King Arthur and his Round Table, or the mythical story of David and Goliath.

The great advantage of the higher criticism is that it has dispelled all traces of superstition except among the most ignorant of our people. A "great western tradition" for many centuries ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth supernatural powers. By some He was believed to be the Most High God. His alleged sayings and those of His Apostles were collected in a book called the New Testament, and were imposed by a priestly caste on the ignorant population of Europe and America. To our scholars and critics we

owe deliverance from this bondage. They have clearly shown by subjective analysis the mythical character of the chief actor in the drama. He was so far as history can be trusted, a victim of unconscious illusion, if not an accomplice in pious frauds.

The old philosopher Archimedes said that if he had a lever of sufficient length and a corresponding fulcrum he could move the world. Old Testament criticism has given us this lever. It has proved to demonstration that the great Teacher believed in all the Jewish fables of the age. He is reported to have said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Again he said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me." Again, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Again, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." It was not difficult to show that no reliance could be put on a teacher who was so destitute of the critical faculty, and it is no wonder that his prophecies have fallen into disfavour. It is true that he is said to have predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, just as Isaiah is said to have predicted the fall of Babylon. But all critics believe that these so-called "prophecies" were made after the event, and antedated to support the tradition of supernatural knowledge. It is clear to men of understanding that one who believed such fables as the brazen serpent story, the flood of Noah,

the tale of Jonah, and the personality of Abraham, cannot be trusted when he speaks of a future life, of resurrection and of judgment to come. The truth is the theological age is past, the age of philosophy and free thought has come. The scholar has dispossessed the priest. The honour and emoluments too long enjoyed by ghostly fathers have passed to men of brains and culture.

The means by which this victory was achieved may now be made public. It was long felt by men of "light and leading" that so long as veneration was paid to an old book called the Bible, and so long as it was taught in our schools and colleges by those who believed it, no impression could be made on the dense mass of superstition. But stratagem accomplished what open assault could not do. The chairs of philosophy and theology were filled by professors who turned their guns upon the citadel itself. The reign of free thought began among the defenders of the faith, and when the enemy made their next assault, they found the gates of the citadel open and its walls crumbling to the ground. A further help was given by a section of the "religious press," which always applauded the latest and most advanced criticism, and by a "mutual admiration society" of authors, which wrote encomiums on each other's books as soon as they appeared. Their motto was "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*" They extolled the books which flouted the convictions of the common people, and raised pæans of victory as each position of traditional faith was stormed and captured.

And so the emancipating work of scholarship is well-nigh accomplished. Faith is now labelled credulity,



and the men of understanding are few who believe in the legends either of sacred or profane history. The world is governed by reason, and our statues are raised to emancipators like Hume and Voltaire, Strauss and Renan.

The doctrine of Epicurus rules the world: "Pleasure is the chief good." The very language has changed. Meaningless words like "patriotism," "benevolence," "self-sacrifice," have disappeared from use; so have archaic terms like "sin" and "salvation," "heaven" and "hell." We no longer waste our resources on building churches and hospitals, asylums and poor-houses. Reason is our deity, and it tells us that the "lethal chamber" is the easiest way of disposing of the sick and dying. Mothers no longer rear infirm infants to trouble the community. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes. Our motto is "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." The Ten Commandments are obsolete, especially the Seventh, which is abolished by statute, and the iron fetters of marriage are replaced by the silken ties of free love. It is true that some old fools still believe the words of St. Peter that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," and that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" and sometimes we have a bad quarter of an hour when a thunderstorm darkens the sky; but we take comfort from the words spoken to our first parents by that great Iconoclast who restored to us the forbidden fruit: 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil' "!!!

## EXPLANATORY NOTE.

---

It seems superfluous to say to educated readers of the "Excursus" that the vein of irony adopted is on the lines of Pascal's "Provençal Letters," or Archbishop Whately's "Doubts of the Existence of Napoleon Buonaparte"; but intimations have reached the writer that some readers who lack the sense of humour have missed the point, and are shocked at its impiety. For such I may say it was intended that they should be shocked at the awful consequences that flow from the rejection of the solemn testimony of Holy Scripture as set forth (for example) in II. Peter, chap. 3, verses 3-7 and 11-13:—

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

## Works on the Holy Scriptures.

**Expository Thoughts on the Gospels**, by the late BISHOP J. C. RYLE. Designed for Family and Private Reading, with Text complete, and copious Notes. A New and thoroughly Revised Edition, well printed on specially prepared paper, complete in Four Volumes. Large Crown 8vo, dark blue cloth, lettered in gold. Price 14s. net. With gilt edges, 16s. net. In the following leather bindings:—Half morocco, gilt edges, 24s. net.; whole morocco, 32s. net. the set.

**Higher Criticism**, by the same AUTHOR, being Thoughts on Modern Theories about the Old Testament. Limp cloth, 4d. net.

**Is All Scripture Inspired?** by the same AUTHOR. An Attempt to Answer the Question. With copious Notes. Second Edition. Cloth, 9d. net.

**Inspiration of the Bible.** Considerations addressed to the Deist and Agnostic, and a Manual for the Young Believer, by Pastor GORDON FORLONG, formerly of the Talbot Tabernacle, Bayswater, W. 8vo, white cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

**Hamilton, Mrs.**—Suggestive Readings with my Sunday School Teachers on the Gospel of St. Luke. With copious Notes and References. Post 8vo, cloth, 1s. net.

—Suggestive Readings on the Gospel of St. John. With copious Notes and References. Introduction by Rev. J. STEVENSON, D.D. Post 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

**Devotional Meditations.** Being Daily Readings for One Month on the Epistle to the Ephesians, by Rev. F. J. HORSEFIELD, Vicar of St. Silas', Bristol. Fcap. 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

**The Illustrated Family Bible.** By JOHN KITTO, D.D., F.S.A., with a Series of Introductions by Rev. T. R. BIRKS, M.A. Containing 800 engravings on wood, and many original notes, In two 4to size volumes (2,500 pp.). Half morocco, gilt edges. 20s.; whole morocco, gilt edges, 30s.

**Rust, Rev. Cyprian T.**—The Higher Criticism. Some Account of its Labours upon the Primitive History (the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua), 1s. net.

**Scripture Truths, or the Way of Salvation**, set forth in words of Admonition, Counsel and Comfort, with appropriate Hymns. Large type. 120th Thousand. 8vo, paper cover, 6d.; cloth 1s. net.

**Simple Readings on the Gospels.** Arranged in Daily Portions for the use of Families and Schools. Compiled from the Works of BISHOP J. C. RYLE, REV. A. BARNES, and other Expository Writers. By A. S. F. Vol. I., 2s. net.; Vol. II., 2s. 6d. net.

---

London: CHAS. J. THYNNE.